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FACTIONS IN COMMUNIST CHINA --  
AROUND THE LEADERSHIP OF MAO

by Fumio Kusano

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FACTIONS IN COMMUNIST CHINA --  
AROUND THE LEADERSHIP OF MAO

/This is a translation of an article by  
Professor Fumio Kusano of Takushoku University,  
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Factionalism has long been considered a problem in Communist China and even now there are frequent discussions on this subject. Interest in this subject has increased since the assumption of national leadership by Mao. Does a polarization of factions exist in Communist China which contain elements of crisis? I should like to discuss this problem briefly.

What should first call our attention are personal relations in their historical contexts. It is clear from the history of the Chinese Communist Party that during the establishment and the early phase of the history of the Party, it is proper to state that the Party was composed of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and his friends and followers, a party of university students, intellectuals, professors and other progressive, extremist upper strata, and intellectual elements only. Furthermore, no one who had studied in the Soviet Union or in the Army was in the Party, and labor and peasantry were represented only by students, and composed mainly of left-wing elements of the Nationalist Party. One might say that it was the one man party of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. Consequently, in this period there were hardly any factions along regional or provincial lines and, if one were to search for it, it was directed by a mixture of the group around the publication Hsin-ch'ing-nien (New Youth) and the Peking University's Marxist research circle.

Therefore, with the down fall of Ch'en Tu-hsiu in the summer of 1927 when the first coalition between the Communists and Nationalists broke down, the personal and factional relations which had prevailed during the period immediately following the establishment of the Communist Party disintegrated completely, and a practically new party, in personal relations emerged. Thus as a result of the division, troubles within the Party, expulsions, conversions, war deaths,

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deaths in prisons, and deaths due to natural causes, only one of the founders of the Party, namely Mao Tse-tung (strictly speaking only two, the other being Tung Pi-wu) was left, and this is why Mao became the leader with the longest personal history of struggle. This was an important fact for the Communist Party, which places great emphasis on the length of party affiliation. One of the main reasons for Mao's domination is the fact that he has no rival as far as the length of struggle for the Party is concerned.

To have participated over long period in extralegal activities, under difficult conditions without once being apprehended, wounded or bedridden from illness is a significant fact. This was not only a matter of capability but also an indication of the good fortune with which he was blessed. His fortune appears to have followed him persistently until the present day. In the Great Revolutionary period (1924-27) when the Party was legally sanctioned, the rank and file had rapidly increased. Consequently, in this period the petit Bourgeois, the intellectuals, the laborers, the peasants, and the military strata contributed to the leadership of the new party. Also, students who had returned from overseas joined the ranks. After that, those leaders who ruled during the Chinese Communist period were those people who had joined the party at this time and rose through the ranks. However, this was the period when the one-man party structure of Ch'en Tu-hsiu gradually declined and because Moscow's China policy became confused, the Comintern element in the party directorate could not gain leadership and a rival factional condition appeared within the party. This lack of leadership and the weakness of party organization led to confusion in the movement and simplified the way for Nationalist suppression. The Sze-chuan Autumn Harvest Rebellion, the Nan-ch'ang rebellion, the Canton Commune, the Hai-lu-li, and the Soviet Movement which failed everywhere, were extremely costly.

But all these were fortunate curtain raises for Mao. These incidents supplied a host of members and leaders to the Chinese Communist Party but at the same time eliminated his party elders and comrades from the battle rank. Old party members were expelled from the party following the fall of Chen Tu-hsiu in 1928 and the majority of Mao's contemporaries either died in battle or died from other causes by 1934. And of the members of the directorate who were older than Mao there were only Hsu Te-li, Chu-Teh, Tung Pi-wu, and Hsieh Hsueh-hao, and in the party records they were all of the younger generation. This transformation of the directorate was not the result of a Stalinist bloodbath, but of the

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unwilled and unplanned result of other activities. Therefore, there were relatively few cases where Mao was personally responsible. Ch'en Tu-hsiu was removed by the Comintern (Stalinist faction), Ch'iu-pai by the Nationalists, Li li-san by "Mifu" and Wang-ming and Hsiang Ying by a battlewound. Only Wang-ming and Chang Kuo-shu were clearly displaced by Mao. These historical factors add weight to the statue of Mao in the party.

The current tradition and custom of the Chinese Communist Party was formed militarily during the Chin-hang-shan period and politically during the Juichin Soviet period, and both were formed anew with Mao as the center, and the influence from the previous period has not survived too strongly. This is the greatest reason for the establishment of the concept of "Communist Party and Mao" and "Mao and the Communist Party."

Mao joined the Chinese Communist Party through Ch'en Tu-hsiu and represented Hunan province but was not able to enter the party headquarters. Hence, during the youthful and formative years he was involved in nonparty activities and the practical action of the organization and did not have the experience of giving out orders from behind the desk. But he finally took over the headquarters. This was the formative basis of his later emphasis on the practical and mass approach line and was the reason for the Party being able to escape from bureaucracy. Furthermore, since he labored for many years in a relatively obscure party position and often found himself in the agony of being isolated he was able to grasp psychological nuances and master the art of manipulating minds. This ability to handle men was of great value, and when he raised the flag of rebellion in Chin-hang-shan, he was able to win over Chu-Teh and other leaders to his banner.

What was especially effective in establishing the absolute dominance of Mao was the Long March from the Kiangsi Soviet to Yen-an. This long period of sharing life and death disintegrated party factionalism, promoted intra-party affinity and formed the new Party structure. Briefly, it formed a structure and cohesion around the person of Mao that was beyond theory, outlook, or policy. The party history thereafter was not underground but was defined in a fixed area and was an open movement to bring a populace under control. Although surrounded by Nationalist and Japanese armies, the military, government, and party workers, according to the base of operations, collectively shared the emotion and attitude which stemmed from the experience of hardship and poverty, so that place of origin, school, and professional origin became relatively unimportant and tended to be dissolved. Moreover, in this atmosphere the fact that a

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relationship based on a paternal model did not develop was because of the influence of party schools, military and political academies and other training organs wherein high party members were, wherever possible, required to undergo four months of training every two years and lower echelon leaders and party members were required to undergo 6 months of training every two years. These activities, combined with party committee meetings on various levels and the activities of the military-political committees, and the regional and central authorities which considered Mao as supreme leader, were the secret of bringing together the upper and lower echelons.

Mao's policy was directed especially at the elimination of factions within the party. His consistent basic policy has been (1) Placing emphasis on party history, (2) Respect for seniority, (3) Emphasis on Achievement, and (4) Respect for specialists. At the same time, both in theory and practice there was strict enforcement of the Mao line and any infringement was not permitted. That Mao is an authentic authoritarian and a dictator is well demonstrated. If by looking at his previously mentioned personnel policies one were to fail to see his deeply rooted dictatorial character with reliance on power, one would probably be failing to analyze his character accurately. That he should convey the impression of having respect for party democracy is a deftly planned pose on his part as a statesman and is not based on the generosity of democracy. In reality from the time of Sino-Japanese War the Chinese Communist Party has come to be dominated by the monochrome of Mao Tse-tung. There is almost no one observable in the party who is aspiring to the seat of Mao's power. Considering Liu Shao-chi and Cho En-lai as the other side is an utterly superficial view of the internal situation of Communist China. They are merely influential flunkies of Mao Tse-tung.

However, in the strata below the seat of Mao's power, conditions are becoming increasingly complex. The party members were young when they moved with Mao from Kiangsi to Yen-an. The average age of the Red Army soldiers was 19 years old and of upper echelon officers was 25 years old. This once young directorate has gradually become mature in age, in theory, in practice, and in experience and has come to stand upon its respective judgement, view, criticism and policy. The scale of the party has grown and at the same time the structure and organization of the society has undergone a great revolution. For this reason for Mao personally, it is a fact that party regulation control and dominance has not necessarily become straightforward and this is one of the

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reasons for conveying an impression of factionalism to the outside. However, this should be looked upon more as a problem of the party leadership rather than as factionalism.

However, although I analyze it in this manner, I am not stating definitively that the current situation in Communist China is monolithic and that no factional polarity is observable. Actually within the Chinese Communist Party, due to the swelling of the party ranks, the relation between the old and new directorate is not altogether harmonious. For example, the pre Long March directorate, the post Sino-Japanese war directorate, and the post Civil War directorate differ in experience and emotion. Especially since the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China the formation of a national bureaucracy has required the inclusion of members with emphasis on technical capabilities, with the consequent emergence of members with a short party record and with no revolutionary contributions. With the economic and political structure becoming more complex the tendency toward specialization within the party, government, and army is taking place regardless of preference, and augurs the emergence of a modern bureaucracy. The possibility that this new, expanded competitive relationship based on the merit system will eventually give way to the formation of intra party factionalism cannot be denied.

Of course, at the present moment, the dominance of Mao Tse-tung is absolute and no one has appeared within the ruling strata who surpasses Mao in genius. Within the country the party does not recognize the neutrality of the administrative organ. Consequently while Mao is well the party discipline can probably be enforced, but if there would be changes in his physical condition I believe there would be problems. That is to say, it does not appear that any decision has been made as to who will take power in his place. That is because the senior members of the party, the great revolutionaries, capable members of the directorate are quite numerous and in good health and they are lined up too closely. Consequently the second generation occupant of the throne has not been determined, and that is probably the way it looks at this time. Although there is order in Communist China today this order is in its very last detail the result of Mao's dictatorial structure and cannot be considered as an immobile, hereditary order. For myself it does not seem that the real second position in the hierarchy has been firmly established.

Finally, the consideration of the personal relationship with the party is an important element in the future of Maoism. Although the present position of Mao is not devoid

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of accidental elements, at the same time one cannot ignore the excellence of his practical and theoretical insight into the nature of the Chinese revolution. Consequently the effective leadership of Mao from the old China to the Socialist revolution will probably never be swallowed into historical oblivion. However, can this historical leadership maintain and develop into the future? Up to the establishment of socialism it was, in a way, the phase of destruction but hereafter it is of construction.

Can Maoism continue to display a superior leadership with respect to the drastically changed social conditions in view of the fact that it has thus far been tackling with problems of the Old China? What are the causes of the recent fluctuations in the policies of Communist China? Am I the only one who feels the limitations of the Maoism and the gap between hopes and reality? Unless my observation is based by my sense of apprehension, new conflicts concerning the leadership in Communist China seem to be in the making.

(Note) Due to the limitation of space, the writer has skipped references to historical data, concrete personal relations, and statistical figures.

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